**Minding Mendocino**

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**Resiliency**

There has been a realization that every single one of us has experienced trauma, loss, separation, and pain. It seems like the larger part of humanity is at risk to some degree, for acting out these difficult feelings and thoughts in less than healthy manners. Without a plan in place, most of us find ourselves reactive in the face of struggles. This can look like outward anger, destructive behavior, substance abuse, or even inward stoicism (“shutting down” may seem more graceful but that does not make it healthier). Is there a time recently when you reached a point of challenge?

* What kept you “going”?
* How did you deal with it?
* Were there possibly any things you could have done differently or more deeply that could have assisted even further?
* Were you able to reach out to anyone? If so, did you find that this was the “best” person to reach out to?
* What internal resources did you draw upon?

In the last article, I wrote about resiliency factors in a discussion regarding ACE scores. Another way to look at a resiliency factors is simply as each of our personal strengths. Every one of us holds certain characteristics that enable our resiliency; these are our gifts. These sorts of characteristics would be termed “internal strengths” because they come from inside of us. One nice thing about internal strengths is that we do not need to rely on anyone else to access them, and no one can ever take them away. Examples of these sorts of resiliencies are as varied as all of us can be. However, in the face of challenges some people can: persevere, think positive, meditate, find gratitude, pray, write, reach out, and so on. Many of us struggle to “name” our inner strengths, since they are so much a part of us we often take them for granted. Yet, there can be power in knowing consciously what these are once we find ourselves in the face of struggles. What makes YOU strong?

“External strengths” can be easier to identify, because they are outside of us. Some examples may be friends, family, community resources/services, going to the gym, a therapist or group, or our pets. Because these are not intimately within our internal realm of control, they can also be slightly less reliable in some situations. For example, what if our ‘crisis’ is in the middle of the night? For this reason, it is the best policy to have both internal and external strengths identified before such a challenge occurs. Some strengths may be a sort of “grey area” in that they could be arguably both internal and external supports. The main point is that we are able to identify what our resiliencies are, not necessarily to categorize them correctly. Personality and preference determine if it is easier for someone to utilize internal or external strengths.

What do you believe in? Many people have found that believing in something bigger than themselves is important in staying resilient. Often this is a spiritual or a religious belief, and often it is a community or family belief. Sometimes, it is simply one other person that is a witness to our struggles. For the purposes of this article, it matters not excepting that there is an awareness growing for you in what this may be for you. The greatest resilience seems to come from such a belief or support, and a great deal of strength can be drawn from believing in something or someone when we are in life’s struggles. Of course, this type of support could be both internal and external depending upon “who” we are reaching out to.

I strongly encourage you to have a plan for dealing with challenges that may arise ahead of time. It is a good practice for anyone in this wild world. The only certainty is that we will have challenges. Though, with strength and perseverance these challenges can become the experiences that teach us the most. They may have the ability to attune us to deeper and more meaningful lives than we ever could have known before.

* What are your internal strengths?
* Who are your external supports?
* What positive activities can you plan to do if your emotions get triggered?
* How can you plan to take care of yourself in the best way next time there is a challenge?

Thanks for reading, Laytonville, and until next time take good care and know you are not alone! Remember that you can write in with questions or topic suggestions to: Long Valley Health Center, PO Box 870, Laytonville, CA 95454. Attn: Jessi Maness.